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For Immediate Release

NEW RESIDENTIAL CARE BEDS PLANNED FOR SOOKE

SOOKE – Seniors living in Sooke are one step closer to receiving improved access to local health services in the form of a new facility with 30 publicly-funded residential care beds and 10 publicly-funded assisted living units, slated to open in 2008.

The Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) is working with the Sooke Elderly Citizens' Housing Society to finalize funding arrangement for the new facility, which would be located at 6744 Ayre Road in Sooke. The Sooke Elderly Citizens' Housing Society would deliver services in partnership with Beckley Farms, an existing not for profit seniors' care provider that operates Beckley Farm Lodge in Victoria in affiliation with the Vancouver Island Health Authority.

"This is great news for the residents of Sooke. This new facility will give seniors more choices and more opportunities to retain their independence," said Health Minister George Abbott. "We are on track towards creating 5,000 new residential care beds and assisted living units in the province, furthering our commitment to strengthen health care."

The Sooke Elderly Citizens' Housing Society submitted a proposal to build the residential care and assisted living facility in response to a Request For Proposal (RFP) issued by the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) January 31. VIHA has already announced developments in Campbell River, Parksville, Nanaimo, Duncan and Victoria. VIHA continues to negotiate with proponents in Courtenay/Comox and Port Alberni and will make announcements about projects in these communities when agreements are reached.

"While a final contract has not yet been signed, VIHA anticipates the Sooke Elderly Citizens' Housing Society will be awarded the contract to build the facility once the contractual requirements are fulfilled," said Mike Conroy, Chief Operating Officer, Vancouver Island Health Authority. "VIHA is committed to developing and enhancing services that support our growing and aging population, and this project is part of our commitment."

"We are pleased to be working with VIHA on this very exciting proposal that will benefit local seniors," said Bill Rumsby, Chair, Sooke Elderly Citizens' Housing Society. "Over the coming weeks, we look forward to working with our partners, the local community and other committed individuals to finalize our funding arrangements for this important project."

In addition to the publicly funded beds and units, the facility would also have two private-pay residential care beds and 15 privately-funded assisted living units.

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"This facility is good news for the community of Sooke, and has been a priority for local government for some time. We would not be at this point without the hard work of the Sooke Elderly Citizens' Housing Society and their dedication not to give up on this project," said Janet Evans, Mayor, Sooke. "We will be working hard with the Society and VIHA to make this project a reality so residents can remain in the community, receiving the support they need to retain their independence."

VIHA's RFP sought proposals from not-for-profit and private operators to build and operate 1,230 residential care beds and assisted living spaces throughout the health authority. This included approximately 930 additional net new beds and spaces by 2010 (727 of those to be completed by December 2008) as well as flexibility for approximately 300 replacement beds in the future.

VIHA received approximately 50 submissions to the RFP, island wide.

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